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UNCLAS HANOI 000252

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; EAP/EX; EAP/BCLTV
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, AID (TDOLAN)
STATE PASS HHS
USDA FOR FAS/PASS TO APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: VIETNAM - AVIAN FLU UPDATE #4

CURRENT STATUS

1. (U) There are currently 58 cases of suspected avian influenza in humans in Vietnam under investigation. Of these, eight have been confirmed as H5N1 in the laboratory, of which six have died. 21 possible cases have tested positive for Influenza A on a rapid test, but have not yet been confirmed on type. 27 other case are pending investigation and awaiting lab results, i.e., admitted with a flu-like illness and specimens taken. Two other earlier possible cases were ruled out, i.e., old possible cases whose type specific tests have now returned negative for H5N1). Of the total 58 cases under investigation, 20 deaths have occurred.

ADDRESSING PAST CONCERNS

2. (U) CULLING - PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE): SUPPLIES OF PPE ARE BADLY NEEDED; HOWEVER, THE GVN IS SEEKING DONORS TO COVER THE COSTS AND THUS FAR, NONE ARE FORTHCOMING.

3. (U) Culling - Adequacy: WHO/CDC continue to describe culling efforts as inadequate based on unofficial reports from visitors to rural areas.

4. (U) HUMAN-TO-HUMAN TRANSMISSION: TO DATE, NO CLEAR-CUT CASES OF HUMAN-TO-HUMAN TRANSMISSION HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN VIETNAM. CLUSTERS WITHIN FAMILIES ARE SUSPICIOUS, BUT IN ALL CASES, POULTRY EXPOSURE MAY HAVE OCCURRED. ACTIVE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES TO ASSESS POTENTIAL OF HUMAN-TO-HUMAN TRANSMISSION, AND A NEW STUDY OF EXPOSED HEALTH CARE WORKERS IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN AT THE NATIONAL PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL.

EMBASSY PREPAREDNESS

5. (U) CDC TDYER MARK SIMMERMAN PROVIDED A BRIEFING TO EMBASSY AND CONGEN HCMC STAFF (VIA PHONE LINK) ON 29 JANUARY. ISSUES COVERED INCLUDED CURRENT SITUATION IN VIETNAM AND THE REGION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO AVIAN FLU. CONSULAR SECTION DISTRIBUTED RECENT FACT SHEET ON AVIAN FLU BY WARDEN MESSAGES ON 29 JANUARY.

6. (U) HEALTH UNIT HAS FIELDDED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ON THE FLUE. IT HAS ORDERED 15 BOXES (FOR APPROXIMATELY TEN PATIENTS) OF THERAFLU, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE NEXT WEEK. CLEANING STAFF HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN ENSURING ROUTINE DISINFECTING THROUGHOUT OUR FACILITIES, WITH INCREASED FREQUENCY OF DISINFECTING IN HIGH VOLUME AREAS, AND HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN THE PROPER USE OF PPE. PRECAUTIONARY MESSAGES ARE POSTED IN BATHROOMS AND IN AREAS WHERE COMMUNITY HAVE ACCESS (E.G., CONSULAR SECTION).

ECONOMIC IMPACT

7. (U) The economic impact of the avian flu so far has been on the poultry industry, though reports are still sketchy. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) estimates that the flu has infected 4.75 million poultry with 255,000 dead, some from the disease and some from culling. Vietnam's total poultry (duck and chicken) population is 254 million. This sector has been growing rapidly so that there are concerns that the influenza could wipe out a rapidly growing sector. No impact on tourism and aviation industries has been reported. In fact, the number of foreign visitors coming to Vietnam in January has reportedly increased by 17% compared to the same period last year.
BURGHARDT